Chapter 1

Getting the Scoop on Podcasting

In This Chapter

- Finding out what podcasting is
- Creating a podcast
- Finding and subscribing to podcasts

Sometimes the invention that makes the biggest impact on our daily lives isn't an invention at all, but the convergence of existing technologies, processes, and ideas. Podcasting may be the perfect example of that principle — and it's changing the relationship people have with their radios, music collections, books, education, and more.

The podcasting movement is actually a spin-off of another communications boom: personal Weblogs, commonly referred to as *blogs*. Blogs sprang up right and left, providing non-programmers and designers a clean, elegant interface that left many on the technology side wondering why they hadn't thought of it sooner. Everyday people could chronicle their lives, hopes, dreams, and fears, and show them to anyone who cared to read. And oddly enough, people did care to read — and still do.

Podcasting combines the instant information exchange of blogging with audio and video files that can be played on a computer or portable media device. When you make your podcast publicly available on the World Wide Web, you are exposing your craft to anyone with a computer and a broadband Internet connection. To put that in perspective, some online sources report the global online population is over 1.2 billion users. In the United States, broadband connections are now more popular than dialup among the 235 million Internet users. And to top it all off, portable players are surging in popularity, with over 22 million adult owners.

This chapter is for the consumers of the content (the audience) and those who make the content (the podcasters) alike. We cover the basic steps to record a podcast and lay out the basics of what you need to do to enjoy a podcast on your media player.

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If you're starting to get the idea that podcasting is revolutionary, groundbreaking, and possibly a major component of social upheaval, great. But not all podcasts are so deep. In fact, many of them are just plain fun!

Deciding Whether Podcasting Is for You

Technically speaking, *podcasting* is the distribution of specially encoded multimedia content to subscribed personal computers via the RSS 2.0 protocol. Whew! Allow us to translate that into common-speak:

> Podcasting allows you to listen to stuff you want to hear, whenever and wherever you want.

Podcasting turns the tables on broadcast schedules, allowing the listener to choose not only what to listen to, but also when. And because podcasts are transferred via the Internet, the power to create an audio program isn't limited to those with access to a radio transmitter.

The simplest reason to podcast is that *it's just plain fun!* We've been podcasting since the beginning, and we're still having a blast, continuing to get out messages to our worldwide audiences and challenging ourselves with new tricks and techniques in creating captivating media. So, yeah, for the fun of it. Heck of a good reason.

The following sections cover other reasons podcasting is probably for you.

You want to deliver audio content on a regular basis

Sure, you can include audio content in your blog if you have one. Many bloggers record audio segments and insert them as links into the text of their blog posts. Readers of the blog then download the files at their leisure. However, audio blogs require the readers to manually select the content they want to download. What sets podcasting apart from blogging is that podcasting automates that process. A listener who subscribes to your podcast is subscribed to all of your content, whenever it's available. No need to go back to the site to see what's new!

You want to reach beyond the boundaries of radio

In radio, the number of people who can listen to a show is limited by the power of the transmitter pumping out the signal. Podcasting doesn't use radio signals, transmitters, or receivers — at least not in the classic sense. Podcasts use the World Wide Web as a delivery system, opening up a potential audience that could extend to the entire planet.

No rules exist (yet, anyway) to regulate the creation of podcast content. In fact, neither the FCC nor any other regulatory body for any other government holds jurisdiction over podcasts. If that seems astounding, remember that podcasters are not using the public airwaves to deliver the message.

Just because the FCC doesn't have jurisdiction, you're not exempt from the law or — perhaps more importantly — immune to lawsuits. *You're personally responsible for anything you say, do, or condone on your show.* Additionally, the rules concerning airplay of licensed music, the distribution of copyrighted material, and the legalities of recording conversations all apply. Pay close attention to the relevant sections in Chapter 4 to avoid some serious consequences. When it comes to the legalities, ignorance is not bliss.

What's in a name, when the name is podcasting?

As with most items that make their way into the conventional lexicon of speech, the precise origins and meaning behind *podcasting* are somewhat clouded. Although the domain podcast.com was originally registered back in 2002 (nothing was ever done with it, as far as we know), and Ben Hammersley suggested that and many other terms in February 2004 (`www.guardian.co.uk/media/2004/feb/12/broadcasting.digitalmedia`), it's generally accepted in the podcast community that the first person to use the term as a reference to the activity we now know as podcasting was Dannie Gregoire on September 15, 2004 (`http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ipodder-dev/message/41`).

Although some assert the name has connotations to the popular iPod device created by Apple, Dannie didn't have that in mind when the phrase was coined. Regardless of the intentions, the term has been *backronymed* (that is, treated like an acronym and applied to a variety of plausible existing meanings). Of all the possibilities, we prefer *Programming On-Demand casting* (not *broadcasting*), which shortens nicely to *podcasting.* But of course, you can choose whichever one makes sense to you.

Granted, the podcasting phenomenon was in part fueled by the wildly popular iPod portable media device, but no evidence suggests that the two were related when the name was coined.

Narrowcasting (the practice of delivering content to a select group) distinguishes podcasting from traditional forms of broadcast communication, such as radio. Where a radio station *broadly* casts its signal to anyone who happens to be within the radius of the signal, podcasts *narrowly* cast content to people who have made the overt decision to listen.

You have something to say

As a general rule, podcasters produce content that likely holds appeal for only a select group of listeners. Podcasts start with an idea, something that you have the desire and knowledge, either real or imaginary, to talk about. Add to that a bit of drive, do-it-yourself-ishness, and an inability to take no for an answer. The point is to say what you want to say, to those who want to hear it.

Podcasts can be about anything and be enjoyed by just about anyone. The topics covered don't have to be earth-shattering or life-changing. There are a few rules and guidelines in common practice, but there may be times when you find it necessary to bend the rules. (That can be a lot of fun in itself!)

Some of the most popular podcasts are created by everyday people who sit in front of their computers for a few nights a week and just speak their minds, hearts, and souls. Some are focused on niche topics; others are more broad-based.

You want to hear from your listeners

We've heard more than one podcaster comment on the fact that they get, well . . . comments. Podcast listeners are more likely to provide feedback for the podcasts they listen to than radio show listeners are likely to e-mail their thoughts to the show host. That's probably traceable to the personal nature of a podcast. Podcasts offer their listeners — and makers — more control, options, and intimacy than traditional broadcast media can. Of course, the radio is much harder to talk back to than a computer with an Internet connection and e-mail.

When you ask for feedback, you're likely to get it — and from unusual places. Because geography doesn't limit the distance your podcast can travel, you may find yourself with listeners in faraway and exotic places. And this feedback isn't always going to be "Wow, great podcast!" Listeners will be honest with you when you invite feedback.

Creating a Podcast

There are two schools of thought when it comes to creating a podcast: The *"I need the latest and greatest equipment in order to capture that crisp, clear sound of the broadcasting industry"* school of thought, and the *"Hey, my computer came with a microphone, and I've got this cool recording software already installed"* school of thought. Both are equally valid positions, and there are a lot of secondary schools in-between. The question is how far you're willing to go.

But allow us to dispel a few misconceptions about podcasting right off the bat: You're not reprogramming your operating system, you're not hacking into the Internal Revenue Service's database, and you're not setting up a wireless computer network with tinfoil from a chewing gum wrapper, a shoestring, and your belt — regardless of whether MacGyver showed you how. Podcasting, as mentioned earlier, is not rocket science. In fact, here's a quick rundown of how you podcast:

1. Record audio and convert it to a download-friendly format.
2. Create a simple but specialized text file that describes your audio file.
3. Upload everything to the Web.

Yes, yes, yes, if it were that simple, then why is this book so thick? Well, we admit that this list does gloss over a few details, but a podcast — in its most streamlined, raw presentation — *is* that simple. The details of putting together a podcast start in Chapter 2 and wrap up in Chapter 7; then Chapters 9, 10, and 12 walk you through all the geek-speak you need to accomplish the podcast.

Looking for the bare necessities

You need a few things before starting your first podcast, many of which you can probably find on your own computer:

- **A microphone:** Take a look at your computer. Right now, regardless of whether you have a laptop or desktop model, Windows or Macintosh, your computer probably has a microphone built into it — or a jack for plugging in an external mic, and maybe even an included external mic packaged somewhere with the manuals, cables, and such.

  Position the microphone in a comfortable spot on your desk or table. If you're using a laptop, it should be somewhere on your desk that allows for best recording results without hunching over the computer like *Young Frankenstein*'s Igor (That's *EYE*-gor.) Check the laptop's documentation to find out where the built-in microphone is located in the unit's housing.

Usually the built-in microphone in a laptop is located close to the edge of the keyboard or near the laptop's speakers. Some models tuck it in at the center point of the monitor's base.

- **Recording software:** Check out the software that came with your computer. You know, all those extra CDs that you filed away, thinking, "I'll check those out sometime." Well, the time has arrived to flip through them. You probably have some sort of audio-recording software loaded on your computer, such as RecordIt (PC) or GarageBand (which comes pre-installed with many new Macs).

If you don't already have the appropriate software, here's a fast way to get it: Download the version of Audacity that fits your operating system (at `http://audacity.sourceforge.net`), shown in Figure 1-1. (Oh, yeah . . . it's free.)

- **An audio card:** Make sure your computer has the hardware it needs to handle audio recording and the drivers to run the hardware — unless, of course, you have a built-in microphone.

Some desktop computers come with a very elementary audio card built into the motherboard. Before you run out to your local computer vendor and spring for an audio card, check your computer to see whether it can already handle basic voice recording.

For tips on choosing the right mic and audio accessories, be sure to check out Chapter 2. Chapter 3 covers all the software you need.

Figure 1-1: Audacity allows you to edit audio and create MP3 files.

Recording your first podcast

When you have your computer set up and your microphone working, it's time to start recording. Take a deep breath and then follow these steps:

1. **Jot down a few notes on what you want to talk about.**

   Nothing too fancy — just make an outline that includes remarks about who you are and what you want to talk about. Use these notes to keep yourself on track.

   All this — checking your computer, jotting down notes, and setting up your recording area — is called *preshow prep,* discussed in depth in Chapter 4 by other podcasters who have their own ways of approaching preshow prep (all of which can give you some starting points).

2. **Click the Record button in your recording software and go for as long as it takes for you to get through your notes.**

   We recommend keeping your first recording to no more than 20 minutes. That may seem like a lot of time, but it *will* fly by.

3. **Give a nice little sign-off (like "Take care of yourselves! See you next month.") and click the Stop button.**

4. **Choose File➪Save As and give your project a name.**

   Now bask in the warmth of creative accomplishment.

Compressing your audio files

Nearly all portable media devices and computers can play MP3 files as a default format. Some play many other formats, but MP3 is used as a common format. If your recording software has the ability to output straight to MP3 format, your life is much simpler. In Audacity's case, you need to download an add-on file. If you can't export directly to MP3, check out Apple iTunes at `www.apple.com/itunes`. (The iTunes window is shown in Figure 1-2.) It does many things for the podcaster, including converting a wide variety of audio file formats to MP3. Yes, it's from Apple, but the Apple folks made sure to create a version for Windows also.

After you install iTunes, follow these steps to convert your audio file:

1. **Choose File➪Add File to Library.**

   Or you can press ⌘+O (Mac) or Ctrl+O (Windows).

2. **Browse for the audio file you want to convert and then click Open.**

   Your file is now in the iTunes Library.

File Edit Controls View Store Advanced Help
iTunes
View
Search
LIBRARY
Music
Movies
TV Shows
Podcasts
Radio
Ringtones
STORE
iTunes Store
SHARED
Chuck's Music on the iMac G4
Chuck's Music: Intel iMac
IBM T20 - Podcast Clips
PLAYLISTS
Party Shuffle
Technorama
01-Intro
Now Playing
Nothing Playing
Name
Time
Artist
Album
Genre
Rating
Play Count
AlienPod 2:15 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
Chuck_n_Kreg 0:11 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
Chuck_n_Kreg2 0:17 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
ChuckChat10-02-05 0:41 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
Famous Quotes_1 0:23 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
Famous Quotes_2 0:23 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
Technorama2Promo 0:19 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
TechnoramaPromo2 0:21 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
TechnoramaPub 1:11 Mark Sheppard Mark Sheppard's Album
Inner Geek 0:12 Michelle Cook Michelle Cook's Album
MTS-2006-07-08 #75 0:35 Mike Smith Mike Tech Show
Hitachi Hard-Drive Project - Nonko... 2:09 Nonko None
Paul Dot Com Security Sweeper 0:22 Paul and Larry
Serve It Cold Promo 1 - Rated G 1:00 Paul Fischer Paul Fischer's Album
StarWarsSweeper 1:15 Paul@t.com Security...
Life on Technorama 1:11 Phil Clark
ChuckChat_Sweeper_01 0:11 RadioDaddy.com ChuckChat.com
ChuckChat_Sweeper_02 0:09 RadioDaddy.com ChuckChat.com
ChuckChat_Sweeper_03 0:07 RadioDaddy.com ChuckChat.com
ChuckChat_Sweeper_04 0:04 RadioDaddy.com ChuckChat.com
yogi 0:16 Recorded Voice
Variant Frequencies Intro 2:04 Rick Stringer VariantFrequencies.com
Variant Frequencies Promo 0:34 Rick Stringer VariantFrequencies.com
House Fire Promo 0:57 Ron Stroope ZIP 71101
Geek Cred Promo 0:38 Steve Riekeberg Geek Cred
ChuckWho 0:30 Steve Riekeberg
GeekCred-TechnoramaID 0:07 Steve Riekeberg
Technorama I.D. Bumper 0:15 Steve Riekeberg
BB-Teaser_01 1:48 Tee Morris
Technorama-Bumper2007 0:14 Tee Morris
TM-bumper 0:27 Tee Morris
Pedrorama Part 2 1:21 Victor Calixo
technosweeper_low 0:33 Victor Calixo
700 songs, 16.7 hours, 1.35 GB

Figure 1-2: Apple iTunes, available for both Mac and Windows platforms, can create MP3 files from a variety of audio formats.

3. **Find the audio file in the iTunes Library and click to select it.**
4. **Choose Advanced➪Convert Selection to MP3.**

   Your file is converted to the MP3 format. Figure 1-3 shows the progress screen that indicates your file is being converted.

The default file format for iTunes file import is AAC. If your menu doesn't have a Convert Selection to MP3 option, go to iTunes Preferences (File➪Preferences on a Mac, or Edit➪Preferences in Windows), under the Advanced tab, Importing tab, and change the Import Using option to MP3 Encoder. The Settings should be at least Good Quality (128 kbps). Now your files will be imported and converted to MP3.

Congratulations — you just recorded your first audio podcast! Easy, isn't it? This is merely the first step into a larger world, as Obi-Wan once told Luke.

Transferring your audio to the Web

An audio file sitting on your desktop, regardless of how earth-shattering the contents may be, is not a podcast. Nope, not by a long shot. You have to get it up on the World Wide Web and provide a way for listeners' podcatcher software to grab that tasty file for later consumption.

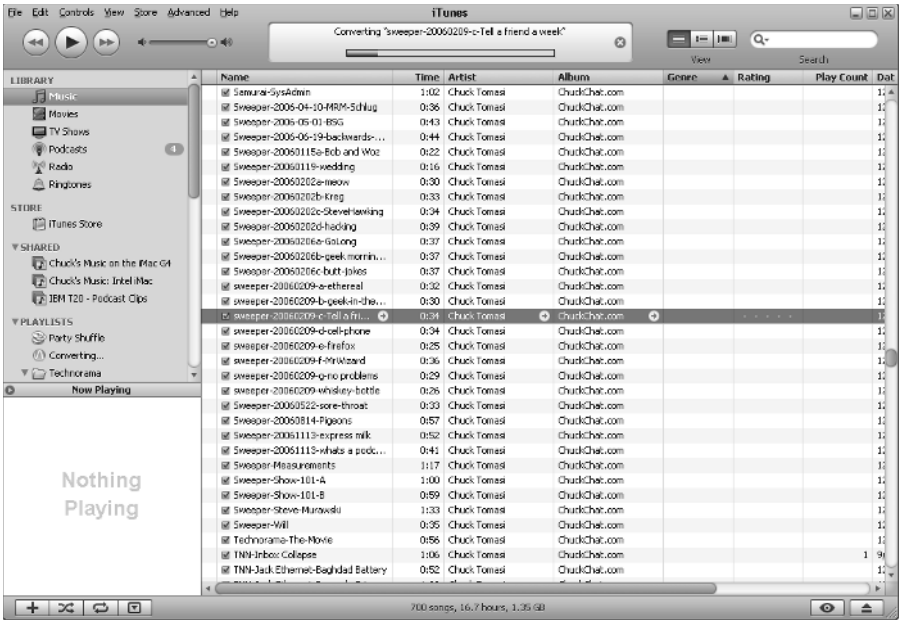

Figure 1-3: While compressing audio files, Apple gives a progress report on the conversion process.

If you already have a Web server for your blog, company Web site, or personal site, this process can be as easy as creating a new folder and transferring your newly created audio file to your server via your FTP client of choice.

If that last paragraph left you puzzled and you're wondering what kind of mess you've gotten yourself into . . . relax. We don't leave you hanging out in the wind. Chapter 10 covers everything you need to know about choosing a Web host for your podcast media files.

Note that we called your audio a podcast *media* file. Podcasting isn't just about audio. On the contrary, you can podcast any sort of media file you like, even video. Although this book focuses on audio files, you can use all the tips we give here to handle other types of media files.

After you post the media file, you need to create a specially formatted text file, known as an RSS file (*Really Simple Syndication*), explained in detail in Chapter 12, and move it up to your Web server. This file describes where to find the media file you just placed on your Web server. This is your *podcast feed*. People who listen to your podcast can subscribe to your show by placing a link to this podcast feed in their podcatching client.

Yes, we know . . . this sounds really complicated. But we assure you it's not. Some hosting companies such as LibSyn (`www.libsyn.com`) specialize in taking the technological "bite" out of podcasting so you can focus on creating

your best-sounding show. With LibSyn (shown in Figure 1-4), moving your audio files to the Web server is as simple as pushing a few buttons, and the creation of the RSS 2.0 podcast feed and even the accompanying Web page are automatic.

If you want to take more control over your Web site, podcast media files, and their corresponding RSS 2.0 feed, look at Chapters 10 and 12. In those pages, we walk you through some essentials — not only how to upload a file but also how to easily generate your RSS 2.0 file using a variety of tools.

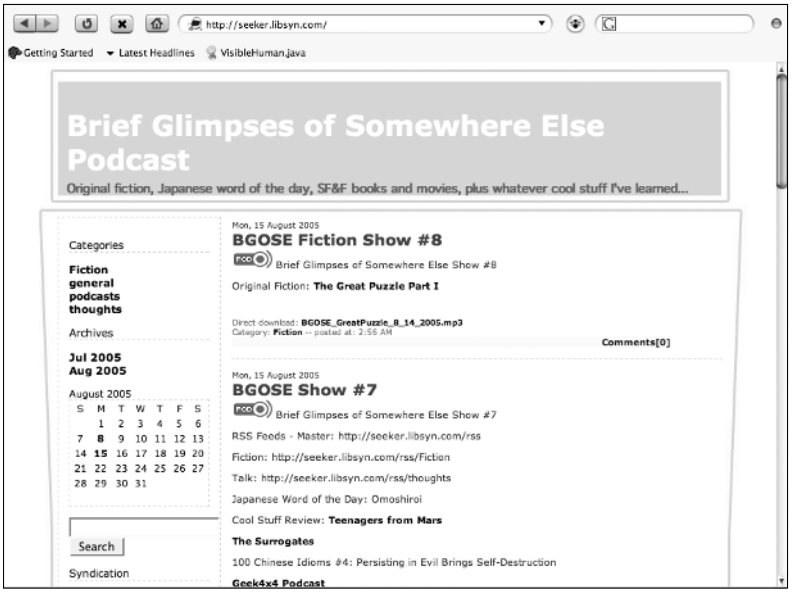

Figure 1-4: LibSyn handles many of the technical details of podcasting.

Grabbing listeners

With media files in place and an RSS 2.0 feed ready for podcatcher consumption, you're officially a podcaster. Of course, that doesn't mean a lot if you're the only person who knows about your podcast. You need to spread the word to let others know that you exist and that you have something pretty darn important to say.

Creating show notes

Before you pick up a bullhorn, slap a sandwich board over yourself, and start walking down the street (virtually, anyway), you have to make sure you're descriptive enough to captivate those who reach your Web site. First, you're going to want to describe the contents of your show to casual online passers-by in hopes of getting them to listen to what you have to say.

You can easily glance at a blog and get the gist of a conversation, but an audio file requires active listening to understand, and it's quite difficult to skim. In effect, you're asking people to make an investment of their time in listening to you talk, read a story, or play music. You need some compelling text on a Web page to hook them.

Descriptions of podcast episodes are called *show notes,* and they're designed to quickly showcase or highlight the relevant and pertinent contents of the audio file itself. A verbatim transcript of your show isn't a good idea, but we do recommend more than simply saying "a show about my day." Chapter 11 discusses ways to create your show notes and offers tips and tricks to give them some punch. (Refer to Figure 1-4 for an example of what show notes look like on a Web browser.)

Getting listed in directories

When you have a ready media file and a solid set of show notes, you're ready to take your podcast message to the masses. You can get listed on some directories and podcast-listing sites, such as iTunes, Podcast Alley, Podcast Pickle, Zune Marketplace, and Digg.com (explained later in this chapter). Potential listeners visit literally dozens of Web sites as they seek out new content, and getting yourself listed on as many as possible can help bring in more new listeners to your program.

A huge listener base is a double-edged sword: More demand for your product means more of a demand on you and the resources necessary to keep your podcast up and running. We recommend working on your craft and your skills, as well as getting a good handle on the personal and technological requirements of podcasting, *before* you embark on a huge marketing campaign. When you're ready, Part IV has more details about marketing.

Part IV spends a lot of time talking about the various ways you can attract more listeners to your show and ways to respond to the ideas and feedback that your listeners inevitably provide. Many podcasters are surprised at the sheer volume of comments they receive from their listeners — but when you consider how personal podcasting is (compared to traditional forms of media distribution), that's really not surprising at all.

Catching a Cast with Your Podcatching Client

So you have the MP3 file, some XML, and accompanying show notes. You're all set, but ask yourself, "How do podcasts get from the Web to my computer?" To access all this great, new content, you need a *podcatcher,* an application that looks at various RSS feeds, finds the new stuff, and transfers it from the

Internet to your computer automatically. In this section, we take a look at some of the different podcatching clients available for your listening/viewing needs.

You may think you need an iPod for all kinds of reasons, but you really don't need one to podcast. Allow us to state that again: *You do not need an iPod to listen to or create a podcast.* As long as you have an MP3 player — be it an application on a Mac, an application on a PC, or a portable device you can unplug and take with you — you possess the capability to listen to podcasts. Depending on the MP3 player, you may even be able to create your podcast on the device as well — but to listen, all you need is a device that can play audio files.

The catcher that started it all: Juice

Juice (shown in Figure 1-5) started life as a product called iSpider, then was branded as iPodder, and later became iPodder Lemon. In November 2005, as if searching for a new identity in the community, the package was rebranded as Juice. It was inspired by a script written by Adam Curry (yes, the former MTV VJ and no, we're not kidding). It promotes itself as an *open-source* (free to use) application that downloads audio files from RSS feeds of your choice directly to your Mac or PC. You can then sync your portable player with your computer's media player, and now you're podcasting-on-the-go.

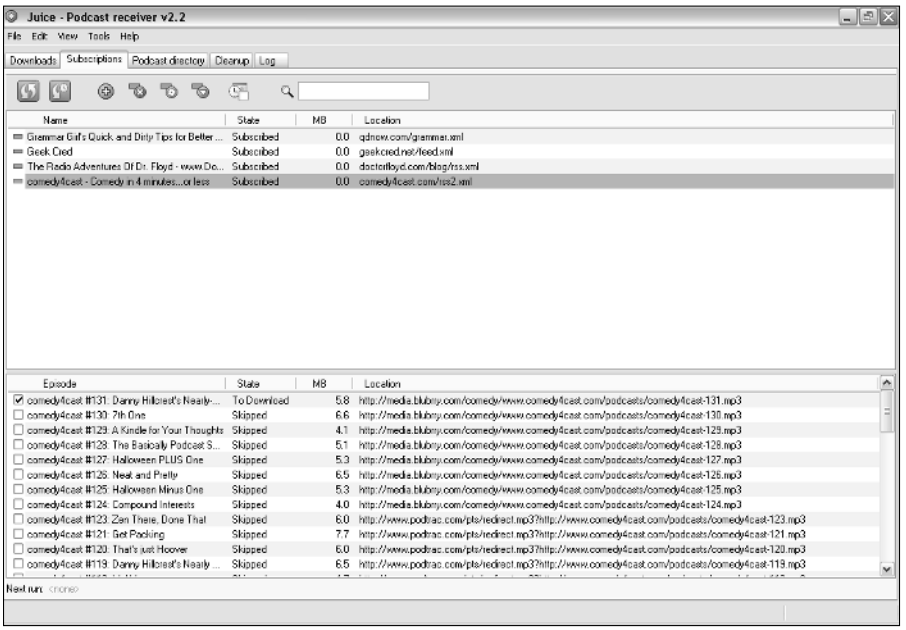
Juice - Podcast receiver v2.2
File Edit View Tools Help
Downloads Subscriptions Podcast directory Cleanup Log
Name State MB Location
Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better... Subscribed 0.0 qdnow.com/grammar.xml
Geek Cred Subscribed 0.0 geekcred.net/feed.xml
The Radio Adventures Of Dr. Floyd - www.Do... Subscribed 0.0 doctorfloyd.com/blog/rss.xml
comedy4cast - Comedy in 4 minutes...or less Subscribed 0.0 comedy4cast.com/rss2.xml
Episode State MB Location
comedy4cast #131: Danny Hillcrest's Nearly-... To Download 5.8 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-131.mp3
comedy4cast #130: 7th One Skipped 6.6 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-130.mp3
comedy4cast #129: A Kindle for Your Thoughts Skipped 4.1 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-129.mp3
comedy4cast #128: The Basically Podcast S... Skipped 5.1 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-128.mp3
comedy4cast #127: Halloween PLUS One Skipped 5.3 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-127.mp3
comedy4cast #126: Neat and Pretty Skipped 6.5 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-126.mp3
comedy4cast #125: Halloween Minus One Skipped 5.3 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-125.mp3
comedy4cast #124: Compound Interests Skipped 4.0 http://media.blubrry.com/comedy/www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-124.mp3
comedy4cast #123: Zen There, Done That Skipped 6.0 http://www.podtrac.com/pts/redirect.mp3?http://www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-123.mp3
comedy4cast #121: Get Pocking Skipped 7.7 http://www.podtrac.com/pts/redirect.mp3?http://www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-121.mp3
comedy4cast #120: That's just Hoover Skipped 6.0 http://www.podtrac.com/pts/redirect.mp3?http://www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-120.mp3
comedy4cast #119: Danny Hillcrest's Nearly ... Skipped 6.5 http://www.podtrac.com/pts/redirect.mp3?http://www.comedy4cast.com/podcasts/comedy4cast-119.mp3
Next run: <none>

Figure 1-5: The ground-breaking, trendsetting, and all-around-first podcatching client — Juice.

Download Juice from `http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net`. After you install it, subscribing to feeds is a simple process. Follow these steps if you don't have a specific podcast in mind:

1. **Click the Podcast Directory tab.**

   Juice comes preloaded with a variety of the more popular directories of podcasts.

2. **Navigate through the directory structure.**

   Click the name of the directory to see the choices offered. In some cases, you may need to click through to a subdirectory to see additional podcasts.

3. **Double-click the name of a podcast.**

   You can also single-click the name of the podcast and then click the Add button near the top.

4. **Click Save.**

That's it! You've just subscribed to your first podcast with Juice.

Of course, you don't have to navigate through the list of podcasts. Follow these steps if you have a specific podcast in mind:

1. **Click the Subscriptions tab.**
2. **On the Subscriptions panel, click the little green button with a plus symbol on it.**

   The Add a Feed window opens.

3. **On your favorite podcast Web site, look for a small icon, typically orange, that says RSS, RSS 2.0, or something similar.**

   The icon may not even say RSS, but simply be a symbol like the one in the margin.

4. **Right click the icon to copy the link location.**
5. **Paste the copied information into the URL field of the Add a Feed window.**

   Or, type it in — just be very careful with your typing! If you get it wrong, you won't get your downloads.

Congrats! You now know how to use Juice to subscribe to any podcasts you happen to come across in the future.

The 800-pound gorilla called iTunes

With the launch of iTunes version 4.9 in June 2005, podcasting went from what the geeks were doing in the basement of the Science Building to the next wave of innovation on the Internet (which was, of course, developed by the geeks in the basement of the Science Building). As always, a step into the mainstream market brought some dismay; the hardcore, independent podcasters considered this a sad day for podcasting as corporate entities (sponsored by Disney, ESPN, BBC, and so on) dominated the iTunes Music Store podcast directory (shown in Figure 1-6). What about the indie podcasts — the ones that started it all? Would they be forgotten? Go unnoticed? Languish unsubscribed? Well, at first, it seemed that many of the original groundbreakers that the podcasting community knew and loved (*The Dawn and Drew Show, Career Opportunities, The Catholic Insider, GrammarGirl*) might get lost in the stampede. But not yet, as it turns out.

Apple's iTunes (available for download at `www.itunes.com`) works as a podcatching client. It lends an automatic hand to people who don't know where to find aggregators, where to find blogs that host podcasts, and which podcast directories list the shows that fit their needs and desires — now they too can enjoy a wide range of podcast choices.

Figure 1-6: The Apple iTunes Music Store's podcast feature.

With iTunes, podcasting reached into the mainstream markets around the world. (And if that doesn't make you go "Wow!" consider this: On August 4, 2005, iTunes launched in Japan. Within four days, the iTunes Music Store had *1 million downloads.* Sony's own MP3 download service averages less than 500,000 downloads a month.) Instead of dealing with third-party applications, Apple iTunes is a one-stop shop for all your podcasting needs.

It gets even better: Subscribing to a podcast with iTunes is just as easy, if not easier than with Juice. Follow these steps to do so:

1. **In the iTunes Music Store, click the Podcasts link located in the top section of the left column.**

   You can also click the Podcasts icon on the top left of the main iTunes screen and the Podcast Directory icon in the lower right. Or search for a podcaster or a podcast using the Search bar in the upper-right of the iTunes interface.

2. **Find the podcast of your choice.**

   You can do that by

   - Clicking the Browse link to browse through all the podcasts in iTunes
   - Searching by clicking the Power Search link

   Both of these links are located in the Quick Links section on the right side of the Podcasts page in the iTunes Music Store.

3. **When you get to the podcast page (and available podcasts) in iTunes, click the Subscribe button.**

   If you're using iTunes for the first time to subscribe to a feed, you get a confirmation message. You can select the Do Not Ask About Subscribing Again option to avoid this message.

After your podcast finishes downloading, you can find the new episodes by going to the Podcasts section in the left column of iTunes. The new episodes are marked to let you know that you have fresh content waiting for you, and iTunes remembers where you left off in a podcast if you pause or zip over to another podcast or playlist.

Options, options, and more options

Of course, everyone's tastes and styles are different, and there are plenty more options for podcatching clients. Maybe you're using Mac, Windows, or an entirely different operating system. Maybe you don't want to install any

new software on your system, or maybe you just like to be different. Hey, that's okay! You too can be a podcast listener:

- **Doppler:** Designed exclusively for the Windows platform, Doppler (`http://dopplerradio.net`) has a strong contingent of dedicated users who are perfectly happy with the features it offers. Additionally, it seems to be a pretty rock-solid piece of software, and it's available for free.
- **Songbird:** Songbird (`www.softpedia.com/get/Multimedia/Audio/Audio-Players/Songbird.shtml`) is another Windows-only application that takes an interesting approach to podcatching (and music) with its Web browser look and feel. The default interface is a bit dark, but it can be customized if you have a little savvy with that sort of thing. Although the software is stable, it was a bit confusing at first to subscribe to podcasts — a little digging through the help provides two options. The product idea is sound, but needs a little maturity as of this writing.
- **Podcast Ready:** In some ways, Podcast Ready (`http://podcastready.com`) is similar to iTunes. It combines simple-to-use software and an easy-to-use Web interface to find and download podcasts. Using a bookmarked link, you can quickly subscribe to podcasts via Podcast Ready's site from any Web page with an RSS feed. Using MyPodder software, you can sync your Podcast Ready subscription list with your iPod. MyPodder is available for Windows, Mac OSX, Linux, and more, and is available to download right from the Podcast Ready site.
- **Zune Marketplace:** Zune Marketplace (`http://zune.net`) is the companion software to the Zune portable media device. The marketplace contains lots of choices for music and podcasts. It is currently available only for Microsoft Windows — which makes sense because Microsoft makes the Zune. Using categories or a search, you can quickly find content that interests you. Many podcasters have the Zune icon on their Web sites to make it easy to get their content with a single click of the mouse.
- **PodNova:** PodNova (`http://podnova.com`) is a service that tracks podcast content, yet doesn't require you to download any software to your desktop. You have the option to download some software so files can be transferred to your MP3 player, but it's nice to know that some services don't require this step. The service is pretty intuitive with a decent search and allows you to set up lists of your favorite shows so you can keep them handy.

This is only a starting point for getting access to podcasts. Any attempt at a comprehensive list here would be instantly obsolete. Podcasting continues to grow in popularity, and new podcatching clients and players are coming out all the time. Don't think podcast listening is limited to your computer or MP3 player — you can even listen to podcasts on your phone or TiVo.

For more information and product comparisons, we suggest heading over to PodcatcherMatrix (`http://podcatchermatrix.org`) and exploring more podcatching clients. Bottom line: At this point, you should easily be able to subscribe to the podcasts of your choice.

Quest for Podcasts

Now that you have your podcatching client, it's time to take a good listen to what's happening in the podcasting community. If you're going to podcast (and with you picking up this book, it's a safe assumption that the interest is strong), it's a good idea to take a look around the podcasting community and see what other podcasters are doing.

Many podcatching clients have internal directories of podcasts, and you can access their listings from another directory or listing site maintained elsewhere on the Internet. Other aggregators maintain their own lists based on how many listeners have used their podcatcher to subscribe to particular shows.

We give you a few other places to get started in the following sections — directories, podcast-listing services, and even podcast-specific search engines. (Check out the various sources mentioned in Chapter 18 as well.) So where are these directories? Fire up your browser and, as Edgar Winter says, "Come on and take a free ride. . ."

There are so many directories for podcasts that Rob Walch of Podcast411 has put together a "directory of directories" (`http://podcast411.com/page2.html`). As of this writing, 161 different directories are listed!

iTunes

For the time being, iTunes is king of the hill when it comes to podcast directories. The directory includes not only show information, searchable in a myriad of ways, but also the ability to listen to specific episodes, subscribe to a podcast with one click, visit the show's Web site, leave comments, and see the podcast picks of other people who share an interest in the show you're viewing — and all that is tied in to the same free, friendly software you use to sync your iPod! When your podcast gets legs and starts running, and it comes time to post your name in the directories, make sure you put iTunes near the top of the list. From a public relations standpoint, it's pretty impressive to say "My podcast is listed in Apple iTunes." Many Web sites even have a link directly to their iTunes podcast page and one-click subscription. You have to admit, the people at Apple are always trying to make things simpler.

Podcast Pickle

Gary Leland and the crew at Podcast Pickle (`http://podcastpickle.com`) take a slightly different approach for listeners to find the podcasts they're looking for. Their best innovation, in our opinion, is the Favorites listing. Rather than rely on voting as a measure of popularity, the Pickle allows registered members to mark as many shows as they like as their favorites. The more people who have marked a show as Favorite, the higher up on the Favorites list a podcast is. And unlike Podcast Alley's fairly unwavering top 10 list, Podcast Pickle periodically takes its top ranked podcasts and moves them to the "Hall of Fame" to allow others to show up in the top listing. A neat idea!

Yes, it's a lot like a popularity contest; you have no way to judge how well *you* might like a show just because a bunch of other people do. That's why Podcast Pickle also allows you to browse by category or search for relevant keywords that mean something to you. Like Podcast Alley, it also has an active forum section where you can see what other folks are saying about a particular podcast before you subscribe.

Podcast Alley

Podcast Alley (`http://podcastalley.com`) quickly became the first place to boast, brand, and generally beat your chest about your show. With incredibly active forums, detailed descriptions of podcasts, and individual episodes — plus the majority of all podcasters clamoring to get their listeners to "VOTE FOR ME ON PODCAST ALLEY THIS MONTH!" — it's no wonder that Podcast Alley is one of the most active podcast listing and ratings service to date.

Zune

Apple has the iPod and Microsoft has the Zune (`www.zune.net`). Like many things before, Microsoft wasn't the first to the table when it came to podcasting. The company took a "wait and see" approach for the first couple years, but eventually got on board with its Zune product family. As of now, the Zune is supported only on Windows platforms.

Like the iPod, the Zune supports audio — including podcasts — and video. Although you can't search for podcasts from the main Web page, you can search from within the Zune software. Click the Podcasts link in the Marketplace section in the upper left of the screen to get started searching and subscribing.

Digg.com

Digg.com is a site originally known for its innovative way of getting news to the masses by having its news stories get noticed by peer selection, a process they call *digging*. In 2006, a podcast directory was added to the mix (`www.digg.com/podcasts`). As more people digg a show (or episode), the more popular it gets and the higher it moves in the digg.com list. That's right, Gracie — another popularity contest. Like other sites, digg.com has its share of "fanboys" of certain shows that garner the lion's share of the diggs that can leave some pretty good content unnoticed. As a directory, its information is well laid out and pretty easy to find.

Other Podcast Resources

It goes without saying that this book is a snapshot in time, and you will likely want to keep up on the latest news and information of the podcasting world. We have a few suggestions to get you started. Perhaps, as you gain experience in podcasting, you'll share some of your pearls of wisdom with the community by contributing back to the vast universe of podcasting that many people like to call the *podosphere.* We recommend trying out these:

- **Blogger and Podcaster Magazine:** If you're looking for a great resource of information from the people who live and breathe new media, look to Blogger and Podcaster Magazine (`http://bloggerandpodcaster.com`). Founded in 2007, the online magazine uses a graphical reader application that makes you feel like you're reading a real magazine! You can also pick up audio clips — and yes, it's even available in a print version sent to your door.
- **Podcast User Magazine:** Podcast User Magazine (`http://podcastusermagazine.com`) is a monthly PDF publication exclusively about podcasting. As producer Paul Nichols says, "[it] is precisely what it says on the tin — a magazine about podcasting." The publication is targeted at everyone from the professional producer to the complete novice. Topics cover a wide spectrum, including business, education, news, reviews, tips, and tricks from the veteran podcasters.
- **New Media Expo:** Some have compared podcasting to a religion. As in many religions, podcasters are drawn to a central gathering place. The New Media Expo (`www.newmediaexpo.com`), or NME, is the annual "Mecca" for podcasters and one of our favorite podcast gatherings. Started by Tim and Emile Bourquin in 2005, the expo is a great way to network with other podcasters, vendors, and attend focused conference sessions.

> If you're watching your budget, there's a fee to attend the conferences, but the expo floor is free of charge. Of course, like many cons and expos, a lot of the fun happens after hours. In 2008, the New Media Expo moved from sunny southern California to "sin city," Las Vegas. (Just remember — what happens at the NME, stays at the NME.)